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ABSTRACT

This document contains a short fictional story about a girl who, with the help of a fictional guardian armadillo, learns how to say "no" when her friends want her to do something she thinks is wrong. Readers will learn how to say no without losing their friends. (NB)

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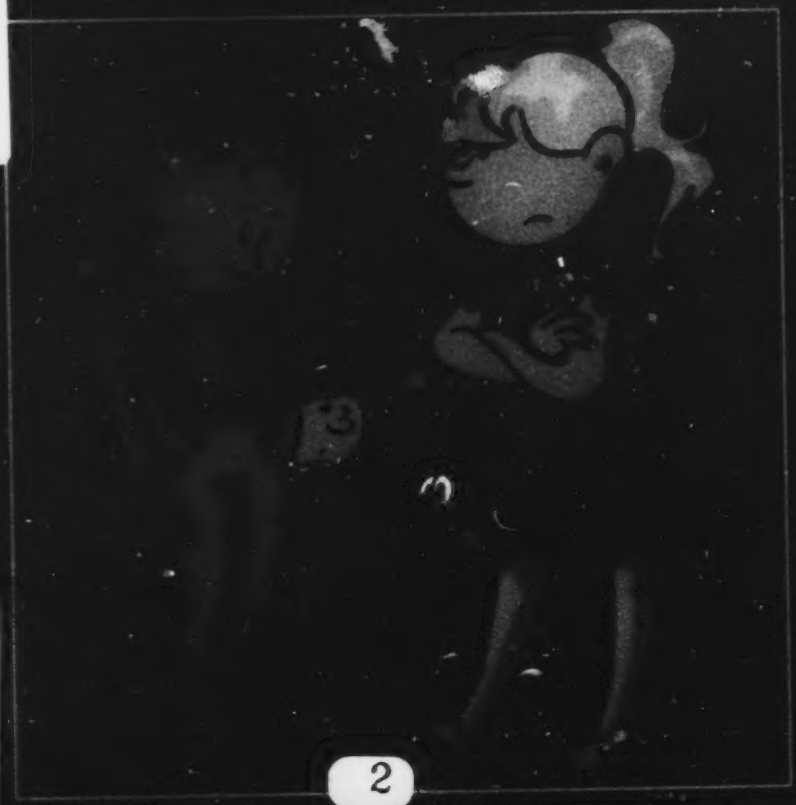
An *Actions for Health* Book

No, No Annette



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CONTEMPORARY HEALTH SERIES

No, No Annette

An *Actions for Health* Book

by ETR Associates

ETR ASSOCIATES
Santa Cruz, California
1994

ETR Associates (Education, Training and Research) is a nonprofit organization committed to fostering the health, well-being and cultural diversity of individuals, families, schools and communities. The publishing program of ETR Associates provides books and materials that empower young people and adults with the skills to make positive health choices. We invite health professionals to learn more about our high-quality publishing, training and research programs by contacting us at P.O. Box 1830, Santa Cruz, CA 95061-1830, 1-800-321-4407.

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An Afternoon Surprise

Annette was angry. Last week, she had left school at recess. She walked across the street to the Fast Shop to buy a bag of chips. She wasn't even hungry, but Connie and Juanita wanted her to go with them.

Annette knew it was against the school rules. But she hated to say no to her friends. The girls got caught, and Annette's mom grounded her for a whole week.

Connie and Juanita were outside playing, but Annette was stuck inside. She was feeling very sorry for herself. She stood by the window, watching her friends play.

"Can't somebody change this?" she wished.

Suddenly, a breeze moved the curtains. Annette heard something go "kerplop." When she turned around, she saw something strange in the middle of the room. She opened her mouth to scream.

"Don't be afraid, Annette," the thing said. "I'm here to help."

"Who are you? *What* are you?" Annette asked.

"I'm your guardian armadillo," the thing said. "My name is Minerva."

"Are you an angel?" Annette asked.

"No, not really," Minerva said.

"Are you magic?" Annette asked.

"Well, I'm a little bit magic," Minerva said. "I'm a special helper for you. You're the only one who can see me or hear me."

Annette looked at Minerva.

"Well, now I know who you are," she said. "And I guess I know what you are. But I don't know *why* you are here."

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Minerva's Mission

"Well, you see," Minerva said, "I was having a picnic on Venus with some of my friends when I heard your wish."

"My wish?" Annette said. "What did I wish for?"

"I heard you say 'Can't somebody change this?'" Minerva said.

"How did you hear that?" Annette asked.

"It's magic," Minerva said.

"How can you help me?" Annette asked.

"Well," Minerva said, "let's think about what you did last week. You knew it was against the rules to leave the school grounds, didn't you?"

"Yes," Annette said, "I knew it was wrong."

"Would you have gone to the Fast Shop if Connie and Juanita hadn't asked you?" Minerva asked.

"No, of course not," Annette said. "I don't even like that store. It's dark and dirty."

"Then why did you go?" Minerva asked.

Annette felt almost like crying.

"I want my friends to like me," she told Minerva. "If I say no to them, they might not want to be friends with me anymore."

"Everyone wants friends," Minerva said. "And it can be hard to disagree with your friends and tell them no. But sometimes friends ask us to do things that are unhealthy or unsafe or that break the rules. Sometimes friends ask us to do things that we just don't want to do. When that happens, it's OK to say no."

"How can it be OK?" Annette asked. "Friends don't like to be told no."

"Sometimes saying no to your friends is the smartest thing you can do," Minerva said. "But you have to say no in a special way. You can say no in a way that lets your friends know you like them even though you don't want to do what they want you to do."

Annette's eyes were as big as saucers. "What is this special way to say no?" she asked Minerva.

"Showing is better than telling," Minerva said. "The next time you need me, I'll be there to help." And then Minerva disappeared before Annette could even say good-bye.

At the Club Meeting

By the end of the week, Annette had forgotten about Minerva. She wasn't grounded anymore. She and her friends had lots of things to do. They had a special club that met after school.

One day, at the club meeting, Sally walked in with a big smile on her face.

"I've got something really fun for us to do," she said. Then she pulled out a cigarette.

"Who's going to join me?" she asked.

"I guess I will," Juanita said.

"Me, too," said Connie.

"Well, OK," said Tanya.

Everyone looked at Annette.

I don't want to try this, Annette thought. It's not healthy to smoke. I know my mom doesn't want me to smoke. And I think smoke smells awful. But what can I say? If I say no, they'll think I'm a baby. They might get mad at me.

So Annette said, "Maybe."

"Maybe?" Sally said. "What kind of answer is that? Do you mean yes or no?"

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Just then, Annette heard the voice of Minerva in her ear. Annette looked around. She couldn't see Minerva anywhere. But she could hear Minerva loud and clear.

"Remember, I told you about a special way to say no to your friends," Minerva said. "Now I'm going to show you how to do it. If you don't want the cigarette, the first thing to do is to tell Sally no in a clear way."

Annette understood Minerva. But she still felt afraid to tell Sally no. She looked at the ground and said no, but her voice was very soft.

"Oh, come on, Annette," Sally said. "Don't be such a baby. All the rest of us are going to smoke."

Annette didn't know what to do next. But Minerva whispered in her ear.

"Say no again," Minerva said. "But this time, say it in a firm and friendly voice. Then your friends will know that you mean what you say, but you still want to be friends."

Annette took a deep breath and looked Sally in the eye.

"No thanks, Sally," Annette said, in a firm but friendly voice.

Sally began to get angry. "Are you a baby?" she asked. "Maybe you should go play with the first graders."

Annette began to feel as if she might cry. Then Minerva spoke again.

"Now it's time for the next step," Minerva said. "Tell Sally why you don't want to smoke that cigarette. Be sure to use the word *I* to explain. Keep your voice firm but friendly."

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Annette felt nervous, but she tried to do what Minerva said.

"Sally, I don't want to smoke that cigarette because I don't like cigarettes," Annette said. "Cigarette smoke makes me sick to my stomach. I'd probably end up throwing up."

"Great job," Minerva said. "Now you're doing it. The last thing to do is to suggest something to do instead of smoking."

Before Sally could say anything, Annette said, "Instead of smoking, let's go roller skating. I can get my brother to give us a ride to the roller rink."

"That sounds like fun," Connie said. "I haven't been skating in a long time."

"I'd rather skate than smoke," Juanita said. "It's more fun."

"Me, too," Tanya said, "I don't like cigarette smoke very much."

"Well, if everyone else wants to go skating, I'll go, too," Sally said.

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Annette started home to ask her brother for a ride. As she walked down the street, she could see Minerva walking with her.

"Thanks a lot for your help, Minerva," Annette said. "If you hadn't shown up, I might have smoked that cigarette. If my mom found out, I would have been in big trouble."

"You really did it yourself, Annette," Minerva said. "And you can do it anytime. Just remember what you did."

Annette closed one eye and looked at Minerva.

"Let's see if I have this straight," Annette said. "I should say no clearly and use a firm but friendly voice. Then I should tell my friends why I don't want to do this. And then I should suggest something else to do."

"Just remember one other thing," Minerva said. "You want to get along with your friends. But you also have to get along with yourself. When your friends want you to do things that you know are unsafe or unhealthy, what should you remember?"

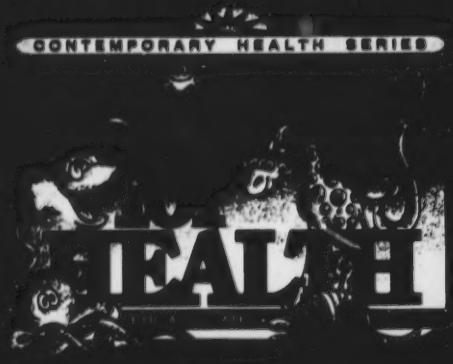
"It's OK to say no," Annette said. "I get it. But I have one more question. What does your name mean, Minerva?"

Minerva looked at Annette and winked. "It means *wisdom*," she said. Then she disappeared into thin air.

POOF!

"Don't be such a baby!"

This book is about ways to say no without losing your friends. Sometimes Annette's pals ask her to do things that are unhealthy or unsafe. With the help of a fantasy armadillo character, Annette learns a way to say no that keeps everyone happy!



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